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SUBJECT: "NON-VIOLENT" OPPOSITION THREATENS UNREST IF LEFT OUT OF POWER

Classified By: Poloff Edward Bestic for Reasons 1.4 B and D

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Political opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi and his supporters are continuing to preach fiery

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anti-transitional government rhetoric, and demand that the political agreement underpinning the transitional government be reopened to give them a share of power. Top Tshisekedi aides claim their party is non-violent, but their overall message to the population appears expressly designed to incite widespread civil unrest. END SUMMARY.

A "Non-Violent" Movement?

¶2. (C) Jean-Joseph Mukendi and Aka Mantsia, top aides to political opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi, met April 14 with the Ambassador, polcouns and poloff. Mukendi emphasized that Tshisekedi's political party, the UDPS, was self-professedly non-violent and did not at all want to see an outbreak of widespread civil unrest in the Congo over the issue of when national elections will occur. Those in power, who control the army and the police, are the real villains, he said; they were simultaneously playing on the international community's fears of widespread civil unrest and blaming it on the UDPS. The Ambassador and polcouns reminded the two that Tshisekedi's message--that the transition ends on June 30, 2005--had the effect of heightening rather than lessening tensions, and noted that civil unrest could quickly become uncontrollable. This, in turn, could lead to unnecessary deaths and perhaps even delay or derail national elections, the centerpiece of the transition.

Help Us Get a Seat at the Table

¶3. (C) Mukendi said the population had lost all confidence in the transitional government, and explained that the UDPS merely wanted to open a "dialogue" with the transitional government, to make it more inclusive and more representative before it became too late. The Ambassador responded that the international community believes it would be folly to reopen the painstakingly-negotiated All-Inclusive Agreement, and said it was unacceptable for any individual or faction to unilaterally declare parts of the constitution null and void.

(Note: On April 2, Tshisekedi did exactly that, declaring in a speech that the transitional constitution article which allows the transitional government two six-month extensions--to June 2006--was "null and void" because the people wanted it so. End Note.) Mukendi in turn declared that the UDPS was "not an NGO," and could not simply back down from its public stance without getting something in return.

UDPS Issues Threats, Demands End to Transitional Govt.

¶4. (U) Meanwhile, a UDPS flyer obtained by post April 14, explaining the party's aims and membership conditions, prominently featured a quote from party secretary-general Remy Masamba that reads "On June 30, elections or not, everything stops." Also, a memo from the UDPS' youth wing, dated April 11 and addressed to the U.S. and other diplomatic missions, declared that "at midnight on June 30, 2005, the transitional government and its leaders will cease functioning," and warned that if their demands were not "immediately and unconditionally satisfied, UDPS youths reserved the right to use any means" to protect themselves, Tshisekedi, and all Congolese, and also to react

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"proportionally and vigorously against any and all attacks, regardless of origin."

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Tshisekedi and company appear loathe to abandon their strategy of heightening public anger in the hopes of gaining power, and we can expect them to continue to do everything they can to repeat and amplify their anti-transition message.

Although the UDPS certainly cannot claim to represent the majority of Congolese, they are the largest and best-known political group to have boycotted the transitional

government, and are making the most of popular ignorance about the All-Inclusive Agreement and general frustration that the transition has not brought an improvement in people's daily lives. END COMMENT.

MEECE